

February 3, 2015

Housing Committee - Public Hearing on

Proposed S.B. No. 405, An Act Concerning the Retention of Security Deposits for Age-Restricted Public Housing, and

Proposed H.B. No. 6142, An Act Concerning Security Deposits for Age-Restricted Public Housing.

Written Testimony of Cathy K. Forcier

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Housing Committee –

I have been a public housing practitioner for over 25 years. My experience includes being the current President of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials more commonly known as CONN-NAHRO. I am currently the Executive Director of the Wethersfield Housing Authority.

I fully support S.B. 405 and also the similar legislation H.B. 6142. There is a need to enhance the preservation of age-restricted public housing options for elderly persons on fixed incomes.

I urge the housing committee to consider amending part VI of chapter 128 of the general statutes to allow landlords of age-restricted public housing to retain security deposits for the full term of a lease. Currently, they only allowed to be kept for one year. Since security deposits can only be used after move-out to address damages and unpaid rent, the current statute has no protection for landlords.

There is a huge negative financial impact as a result. The vast majority of tenants in state elderly housing have social security as their sole or majority source of income. Since one can't garnish social security income, there is no means to collect for damages or unpaid rent. This results in higher administrative costs that can only be paid for by increasing the rents of all tenants. Since there are no ongoing operational or capital subsidies, the rent is the only source of funds to cover these costs. This is unfair to tenants who abide by their lease and take good care of the physical premises.

Due to the income levels of the population we serve, the rents can't be increased to levels that will cover these unpaid debts as well as to put aside for future capital needs. This issue affects the preservation of the housing the state has put a large investment into (original construction and recent rehabilitation efforts).

The need to preserve housing for the State's aging population. I encourage you to support S.B. 405 and also the similar legislation H.B. 6142.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy K. Forcier